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tion of another township, we will not have to go through the roll of explaining the how and why. They understand and the popularity of the service has spread like wildfire.

We are learning in our experience on the "open road" "how the other half lives." The folks seem to have a propensity for migrating every six weeks. We have never gone on a route a second time that we did not meet up with this condition. These folk are tenants and move from one farm to another, sometimes we find them on one route, other times on another, and again perhaps they have moved into the other township, or they have entirely disappeared. On the other hand, the majority of the patrons are wide awake, progressive people.

We urge the patrons to indicate to us the books they wish, either when we call, or by phone, or by post. The books are taken on the next trip, or if the want is urgent the books are sent immediately by mail and can reach the patron within twenty-four hours.

We have made every trip scheduled this year with the exception of six weeks in the middle of the winter. At this time the books were sent and returned by mail.

It is always a great disappointment if we do not arrive on the date planned. However, the patrons know if the weather is inclement we will arrive on the next fair day following date.

There are four very active country clubs in our community. We either make up a library on the subjects covering the year's work and place this collection in the hands of the president of the club for distribution and to be held until the end of the club year, or serve each member of the club directly from the library, the member notifying us ahead of time. The material is either taken to them on a regular trip or sent by mail. The library is largely responsible for the splendid coöperation there is between the town and country clubs, all working together for the best interests of the entire community.

The work with the rural schools has barely been mentioned, but for lack of time it will suffice to say that we do all we can to meet the needs and demand. This year we will have work with eighteen rural schools.

We are still dreaming dreams and seeing visions and will never rest until our entire county has the advantages of library extension.

A FLEXIBLE BOOK COLLECTION

BY JESSIE WELLES, *Toledo Public Library*

In our endeavor to reduce complexities, to study methods of reaching a desired end by the simplest, most direct means, the book collection is receiving its share of attention. Here the purpose or desired end is to meet the demands of a variety of patrons in a manner highly satisfactory to them by a system involving no unnecessary expenditure of time or service, which last two factors we estimate in terms of dollars. In short we strive to combine ideal service with practical economy. It is essential to keep both these points in view when planning short cuts and money-

saving schemes, for there is danger of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Simplification in the routine of the catalog or order department easily yields statistics of time saved, but who can calculate the prestige lost when such economies lead to slow or inaccurate service in the circulating department? Who can measure how many degrees the quality of library service drops when borrower and staff are irritated daily by a time-saving-in-the-catalog-room economy?

Early in this century the discussion of book collection problems involved ques-

tions of open or closed shelf collections and their relation to each other when appearing in one library or of the treatment of dead wood and its elimination by storage. With the growth of branch systems, of stations, school libraries, and the many forms of library extension, new questions have arisen and the problem has taken a new form. We ask ourselves now:

(1) How shall we choose the initial book collection for a branch and how increase, supplement, or weed out that stock thereafter?

(2) What lending collections shall we maintain at the main library, serving what groups or communities and through what agencies?

These questions are answered in divers ways and any suggestions here given are designed to serve as a basis for discussion. They represent the usage or tendencies of a few of our large branch systems.

In considering the first question, how shall we choose the initial book collection for a branch, we take issue primarily with the time honored idea that it shall be based upon the "books which should be found in every library." The Bible, certain reference books, a large group of children's books are universal in their use and usefulness, but for the stock of books to lend to grown people let us throw aside standard lists and nineteenth century policies and think in twentieth century terms. Stocking a branch is not analogous to stocking a small library. The branch of today borrows continually from the main library by means of a delivery system undreamed of twenty years ago, making the books in the main collection available to all the city for the asking. If a librarian, as Mr. Kerfoot has expressed it, "regards literature as a plucked bouquet, not as a blossoming plant," he may place upon his branch shelves scores of cut flowers, plucked by various list compilers, and send his readers to the main library to watch the plant blossom. Is it economy to place in the branch books which people should want to read or those which ex-

perience tells us people are reading? It takes less time to check a list than to call together a committee of two or three people who are serving the public in the main library, or other branches and select from titles old and new a group of books which are being read in the city in question, but counterbalancing the time spent is the satisfaction to the reader and the saving of money which would be spent upon books fated to stand on the shelves and gather dust. The fiction order may be quite complete including a generous selection from the works of Scott, Dickens and other great novelists whose writings are read, but not Besant and George MacDonald and William Black, whose works were read, unless experience shows that they still are popular in the city served.

The first months of service will show the tastes of the community at which we can only guess beforehand, and we may well lend from the main library a number of books which we think the people should read but perhaps will not, and find out whether it is economy to buy branch copies. Long time loans from other branches are undesirable as questions rise later in regard to rebinding, discard, replacement and catalog records and the routine becomes unwieldy and difficult to conduct with accuracy.

After the opening of the branch the daily requests for books which must be borrowed from the main library indicate definitely the subjects and titles in demand and orders based upon them and upon general demand should be placed at least every three months. At the end of a year the branch will be stocked with an active working collection, constantly increased by regular weekly orders of current books.

Before taking up the rest of this problem,—how to increase, supplement or weed out the branch stock of books,—we must turn our attention to the organization at the main library. Here one finds, variously, in addition to the main lending collection, independent groups of books for use in stations, in schools, for branch loans and for other agencies. Does this

plan serve the borrower well and is it economical?

The borrower who comes to the loan desk for "The Life of the Spider" and learns that it is out, turns away patiently to come another time, while in the stations or schools collections under the same roof stand idle copies. Is this good service? If he expresses an urgent desire for the title it is sometimes looked up in other collections, while requests from branches are often looked up in this way or borrowed from other branches. It is the borrower who comes to the main library and who makes no fuss who loses. To look up in other departments every book reported out would be manifestly impossible.

With this system of independent collections the selection for a given agency is hampered by a limited stock. The station or school librarian cuts her coat by her cloth and a certain sameness prevails from year to year in her individual collections. Is this serving the borrower well? In some libraries the stations and schools librarians supplement their agency collections by loans from the main lending collection, but such loans are seldom unlimited as to time, a handicap to their usefulness. Why not make the main lending collection comprehensive enough to care for all these demands, merging the various groups into one? This is a practical plan having the elements of elasticity, of allowance for contraction or expansion, a plan which adapts itself easily to the ebb and flow in circulation which baffles us all. It gives economy of service in that there is but one place to look for a book, economy in ordering, for orders are grouped, economy in cataloging which every cataloger recognizes. It has been tried and it works, and the tendency of the day in progressive libraries is towards unification.

Duplication in such a collection must be based upon practice rather than theory. The collection must serve the main library borrower satisfactorily, but other departments drawing from it must not be limited as to choice or time. This may be accom-

plished by submitting for the inspection of the librarian in charge of the main library circulating department all collections chosen for long time loans to other departments, and placing in her hands the responsibility for duplication. She should duplicate at once books chosen for other agencies which she needs for her borrowers, and be free to hold the copy in stock until the duplicate arrives if she feels that it is necessary.

The effect of the plan upon various phases of the work is along the line of good service and economy. Order department chiefs welcome it and one well-known chief advocates an organization which combines in one head the supervision of branches and order work. This is a bit too radical to receive the endorsement of many, but it is a straw which shows the way the wind blows—towards a greater unification of orders for purposes of economy in buying.

Taking up in detail the effect upon book orders we find that the plan reduces the number of copies of new titles needed. These are selected in weekly or bi-weekly meetings, the orders for all departments and branches being combined on one card, the destination of copies being indicated. A branch needing a book for a limited number of borrowers is served by an added copy ordered for the main collection and lent to the branch for a period defined by its actual need. Such an order may be made to serve two or three branches in succession, the book finally reaching the main library shelves where it serves the various agencies or the main library borrower. This plan cuts down very materially the number of copies ordered for branches.

As it is far easier to decide upon a new title for a large collection than for a small one, this must be taken into consideration in devising a system for ordering. If the books under discussion are obtainable on approval, the branch librarians may examine them after the book order meeting and hold their orders until they have looked over their branch collections on subjects

treated. This gives the highest efficiency. If the books are not available, a branch librarian when doubtful about a title may request that the main copy be held for inspection when it is received. Both systems have been tested and found practical. It is especially important that time be given the branch librarian to consider the book in relation to her collection before ordering, whether this be based upon advance lists of books ordered for the main library or upon examination of the books themselves.

An essential in this plan is that the person in charge of the main circulating department shall be guided as to the number of copies ordered by the orders of other departments and branches, duplicating to meet the probable demand which she soon learns to estimate. When possible, orders for added copies of a book already in a collection are held until the next book meeting so that forthcoming orders from all points may be combined or perhaps the order made unnecessary by a proffered loan of the title. The final order should be subject to the approval of a person who is familiar with the book collections of the different agencies and the demands upon them. Replacements may often be filled by lending main library copies no longer in demand, a saving in cost of book and overhead expense and one of the important economic factors of the plan.

Having disposed of new titles, added copies and replacements we come to withdrawals, one of the important points in a plan for flexible branch collections. Withdrawals from branches have been and still are regarded by some catalogers and others not serving the public directly as an indication of earlier bad judgment. With this also we take issue. The main library serves a diversified public, and it draws all real students and scholars who invariably seek the largest book collection. The branch serves a limited community where population and interests change from year to year. If there can accumulate dead wood in the collection serving a

large and diversified group, how much more quickly will the small collection cease to interest the smaller shifting group. The new books are never on the shelves, which eventually present a pattern, to use the term of the day, and the set pattern bores the reader. Because those shelves look the same, day in, day out, he loses interest. "I have read all those books in the open shelf room," said a bookish, intelligent man. To the reply "you know you haven't," he said, "of course, but I feel as though I had. It always looks the same"—and in that room a high salaried staff was spending hours daily to keep on its shelves copies of the carefully selected titles which formed the really ideal collection. To quote Amy Lowell, "What are patterns for?"

Once convinced of the wisdom of systematic withdrawal from branches, it becomes part of inventory, and the branch librarian is urged to send to the main library annually all the titles which have not been used within a given period, this period varying in different cities according to experience. When cancelled from branch records and sent to the main library the other branch librarians select from the withdrawals such titles as they need and the chief of the circulating department, consulting with the chiefs of the schools and stations departments, takes most of the remainder, looking forward to loans throughout the system.

It is desirable with this system that there be but one series of accession and copy numbers, using a letter to indicate that a given copy has been placed in a branch collection, as this greatly simplifies transfers.

The discussion of temporary loans from the main collection to individual borrowers at branches or any other agency for the usual lending period of four weeks, has been omitted as too well established a practice to interest this audience. The infinite possibilities of the practice of long time loans of groups of books from the main collection to branches present a fertile field for discussion. This method

meets special demands in branches admirably, is generally used for books in foreign languages, and more or less used for technical and other expensive books.

To sum up, the claim is made that a library serves the reader more satisfactorily and economically by flexible book collections in branches and a unified lending collection at the main library, combined with a good delivery service to all agencies. To this may be added the opinion that the plan develops rather than dulls the initiative of the branch librarian to whom the principles of natural selection and the survival of the fittest prove a spur to intensive study of her books and the needs of her community. She has absolute freedom to fit the one to the other, and

her success depends upon her knowledge of both and her own judgment and energy.

The chief of the circulating department at the main library carries a large responsibility, for upon her wisdom and patience much of the success of the one collection system depends. By wise manipulation the books wear out more evenly and copies of titles whose popularity has waned shift from the main library to replace discarded copies in branches until the title dies down to a few copies or is eliminated altogether.

The whole scheme is based upon coördination and can succeed only when carried through in a spirit of hearty, broad-minded coöperation with a big vision of the purpose of the library in the community. According to the spirit which animates the workers it stands or falls.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS IN RELATION TO THE LIBRARY WORLD

BY GEORGE PARKER WINSHIP, *Widener Librarian, Harvard University*

The numerous university presses which have started during the past thirty years are supported largely by the libraries. A considerable proportion of them entered the publishing business because it is well known that a sufficient number of libraries can be relied on to buy anything that is issued under respectable auspices. They are kept going by the larger number of librarians who are unable if they once secure a volume in a series, to refuse to purchase whatever else comes out in the same form. The result has been that a great many things have been printed for which there never was any demand either from readers or investigators of anything except academic statistics. The librarians, being largely responsible for this, have only themselves to blame if they find their shelves filling with books whose impressive titles make their uselessness more pitiful. The remedy is in their own hands.

Two reasons account in large part for the present vogue of "presses" under uni-

versity patronage. One is the great prestige of the Clarendon or Oxford University Press. This more than any other single thing, except the achievements of its graduates, has made Oxford the best known institution of learning in the world. The other reason is the tradition accepted from continental practice, that a Doctor of Philosophy should be required to show his name on the titlepage of a printed thesis. The theory on which this requirement is founded is admirable, but the dreary piles of uncataloged German doctoral dissertations in some, at least, of those American libraries that have felt obliged to collect them, prove that the theory has not produced any better results in the past than in the New World.

Each university desires, quite properly, to get as much credit as it can for the work done under its roofs, and the widespread circulation of its name on printed titlepages setting forth the results of that work ought to assure this. The desire to